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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce. H. WILDON CARR. London and New York: Macmillan and Co. 1917.

Prior to 1914 I should have read this book with pleasure though with vigorous dissent. Since we have seen the fruits of certain German philosophies, a new sense of responsibility has made itself felt. With an almost comic surprise, philosophers have come to realize that their utterances are not mere intellectual babblings and may be fraught with dire consequences. A philosophy carries with it an attitude toward life, an attitude that must be taken seriously, for its consequences may be serious. The philosophy of Croce seems to me to bear a grave menace. If fundamental facts would justify no other interpretation, we should have to put up with it. But even where the facts can not be questioned, they can be thrown into a different perspective, used differently with a far healthier result.

There are other undesirable philosophies besides those of war and power. There is a philosophic way, subtle, slow, but sure of undermining character and intellectual integrity. Obscurantism, intuitionism, and the cult of feeling are the friends of spiritual anarchy; perhaps a worse foe than the will to power. These things I find in Croce. Mr. Irving Babbitt ought to understand this reaction, for his New Laocoon senses so keenly the danger to art in such philosophizing. I only wish he had seen more clearly the danger to civilization that is fostered by the art theories he condemns. He has his gaze fixed on a symptom of a modern ailment, but neglects the disease in correcting the symptom. In a healthy society such art as he condemns could not flourish and a philosophy like Croce's could not flourish.

If we are to have a world that is a suitable place for human beings to live in, there are four mental traits we must cultivate: clarity in thinking, intelligent direction of instinct, creative endeavor subject to experimental confirmation, and moral zeal to which hedonism is irrelevant. Croce, explicitly or implicitly, offends at each point. Let me illustrate.

"Philosophy studies reality in its concreteness; physical science studies reality in its abstractness" (p. 24). Philosophy and science "stand to one another in the wholly unique relation that for philosophy, reality or mind is concrete, the whole; for science, reality or nature is abstract, a partial aspect. Philosophy is therefore the Science of Sciences" (p. 28). It is true that philosophy and science deal with the same world. I should say that prediction and control are made possible by science and directed in application by philos-

ophy. But if the concreteness of philosophy is contrasted with the abstractness of science, as being knowledge of the whole as over against knowledge of the partial, the concreteness of the philosopher is a petty thing. I suspect it would be safe to challenge any philosopher to utter a word, or word combination, denoting any characteristic of this concreteness. If philosophers really confined themselves to discussing the world as a whole, philosophic literature would be much reduced in quantity. I can not recall one who has ever done so among the many who have expressed this intention. The last sentence quoted is a riot of obscurantism. To paraphrase: The study of the concrete whole (philosophy) is the study of the abstract (science) of abstractions (sciences). In spite of Mr. Carr's elaborations, I do not believe such thinking can ever attain the virtue of clarity.

We still have our intuitions. "The intuition is the undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and of the simple image of the possible. In intuition we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to the external reality, but objectify without addition our impressions such as they are" (*Esthetica*, p. 6); (p. 62) "Intuition is . . . mental creation. Intuitions are the matter of concepts. . . . If knowing is not making or remaking what the mind itself has produced, are we not turning to dualism, to the thing confronting the thinker, with all the absurdities dualism involves?" (pp. 80-81). Intuition is the fundamental mental fact, more fundamental than intelligence. We find this again and again. If it were true that dualism were the only alternative to this theory of knowledge, I am not sure but that it would not be more healthy minded. I know that a horse has four legs, but to describe the process involved as making or remaking something my mind has itself produced is a task fit only for the class-room lecturer marking time. I am afraid of intuition. The term is always changing its meaning, even with as able a thinker as Croce. It always gives excuse for taking refuge in instinct and relaxing the effort to be intelligent.

Intuition is here called creation, but "the individual mind . . . carries along with it, in its esthetical and logical inventiveness, a past which is itself determined in the present and which is also itself eternally determining the present. The reality, therefore, which confronts the individual mind is history, and with history the individual mind is identical" (p. 18). In so far as this means that the human mind is a product of evolution and that it bears in itself the marks of the experience through which the individual and the race have passed, it is true enough, but to continue that "the reality, therefore, which confronts the human mind is history, and with history the human mind is identical" is pernicious obscurantism and false.

The reality which confronts us is present fact, which of course has a history, and almost more, an anticipated future. If history is merely a name for process, or for a Bergsonian *élan vitale*, we have here an hypostatized abstraction, substituted for the actual processes of evolution. Nor can the mind be identified with history, even in this sense, any more than can a frog with the pool in which he swam as a tadpole. There is no hint here of the specific creative processes by which man may advance his mastery over life. The emphasis on history makes implicitly denied what is explicitly claimed, human creativeness.

This philosophy is laid out on the dichotomy of knowing and doing. These in turn are subdivided. Knowing gives us intuition, individual, the immediate expression of the image, and the concept in which the image is universalized; doing gives us action as of immediate utility to the individual, economic, and action as universal, ethical. Pleasure is the positive expression of economic activity, pain its negation. "As, then, it is the positive economic activity on which ethical activity depends, for only the positive is(!), and as the positive expression of ethical activity is duty, there can never be an opposition between pleasure and duty; the two terms must coincide. 'When we speak of a good action accompanied by pain our words are a contradiction, or, rather, we are using a mode of expression which can not be meant literally. A good action, in so far as it is good, always brings satisfaction and pleasure. If it be accompanied by pain it can only be that the good action is not yet wholly good, either because, besides the moral action, which itself is pleasing, there is a new practical problem yet unsolved and therefore painful' (*Practica*, p. 248)." I am frankly tired of efforts to make some sort of synthesis between the good and the pleasant. Many a woman has sent her husband or sons to the war because she felt the moral need of victory. She may be proud of them, approve their sacrifice or her own. Such an act is intensely moral, but it is accompanied by at least as much pain as pleasure. I know the situation can be juggled into the language of hedonism in terms of satisfaction and "unsolved practical problems," but I think in so doing it is thrown out of true perspective. My point is that to consider the question of pleasure-pain in such situations is to bring in psychological by-products that are dangerously confusing. The real aim of morality is a better integrated individual and social life.¹ If the psychologist can assert that this will result in happier living, well and good, but the thing for the individual to keep before him in moral striving is factual change in character, for the individual, and in human relations, for society; that is, factual consequences

¹ Cf. Holt, *The Freudian Wish and Its Place in Ethics*.

with respect to integration. If pleasure is to be added, it is more likely to appear in a future generation than in the present moral individual. As a matter of observation, I am convinced that to take hedonism seriously as a philosophy, does not produce even the morality that a hedonist can approve.

To be just to Croce, let me add that he often exhibits the manly heart which, according to Freitag, insures a satisfactory denouement to the drama. There is a good ring in the following: "A knowledge which did not serve life would be superfluous and, like every superfluity, scrapped. . . . Knowledge serves life and life serves knowledge. The contemplative life, if it is not to become idle stupidity, must complete itself in the active, and the active life, if it is not to become irrational and sterile tumult, must complete itself in the contemplative. Reality in particularizing these attitudes has fashioned men of thought and men of action, or rather men in whom thought, and men in whom action, predominates. Neither is superior to the other for they are cooperators one with another (*Practica*, p. 207)" (pp. 109-110).

I have, of necessity, exhibited only fragments of this philosophy and can not take it amiss if any one applies to my comments Croce's own fine passage on life: "Life is composed of a fixed web, woven of ever varying actions, vast, small, and infinitesimal. No thought is skilful enough to carve that web in pieces, and reject some as less beautiful in order that in the chosen pieces alone, cut out and disconnected, it may contemplate the web, for it will no longer exist (*Practica*, p. 336)" (p. 118). I am not sure of the truth of the passage, but if true, it indicates the very reason I can not reconcile myself to Croce's philosophy, in spite of his moments of fine feeling set forth so admirably by Mr. Carr. As a whole, like his romantic expressionism in art, his philosophy seems to me an emotional debauch that must sap our clearness of vision, soften our firmness of purpose, and undermine our constructive energy. It encourages the undisciplined mind that prefers revolution to evolution. Hence its menace. To-day we need, not the "concreteness" of totalities, but the "abstractness" of analysis. Our flights must start from the solid earth, not swoop down from the clouds. Philosophy that does not rise in this humble way can only appeal when we are less serious minded. Fortunately there is much philosophy among us not in these straits.

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Christian Belief in God. GEORG WOBBERMIN. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1918. Pp. xvii + 175.

It is a pleasure to read a critical defense of Christianity which maintains throughout so high a level of tolerance and courtesy to